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The Scientific Journalism According to Elisabetta Caminer: Objectivity, Exactness of Information and Universality

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ABSTRACT

Elisabetta Caminer offers the first example in Italy of an editor of literary journals. She wrote in order to divulgate subjects that were not normally accessible to everyone, yet also to combat the prejudices. The attention placed on the exact source of all the news and excerpts reported represented a rather unique case in the history of Italian journalism of the time. In her texts emerge the objectivity of information, the responsibility for expressive choices, sometimes even subversive - as in the choice of the code - and the awareness of change in scientific communication. Science, morality, politics, academies, inventions, education, all these themes found in the pages of the her magazine a scientific, rational, rigorous treatment, which left little room for subjective judgment, yet a great deal for the objectivity of the text. As well as, in her articles we found a commitment to the battle for women's rights to scientific education.

Keywords: Scientific journalism - Scientific education - Women's rights

1. Introduction

In the eighteenth century, in addition to the mercantile origin of the daily press, we should not forget the importance of the erudite and cultured origin of the literary gazettes. The latter circulated in salons and cafes, passing through the hands of intellectuals who read and commented on the latest in literature, music, art, travel. Habermas, in his *Storia e critica dell'opinione pubblica*¹, discusses how what was once a literary public sphere would soon transform into a political public sphere.

On September 1st, 1768 in Venice, *L'Europa letteraria* was first published, a periodical review directed by Domenico Caminer. At this point in time, journalism already had a tradition in Italy. There was a need to communicate ideas, as well as the desire to break down the regional barriers that the monarchy had helped maintain and consolidate. The director's seventeen year-old daughter, Elisabetta, collaborated on the magazine from the beginning, as well as the abbot Alberto Fortis. In 1774, the magazine changed its name to *Giornale Enciclopedico*. In 1777 Domenico Caminer handed down the direction of the newspaper to his daughter, and from 1782 the magazine took on the title of *Nuovo Giornale Enciclopedico*.

There is little doubt that young Elisabetta Caminer nurtured a considerable interest in contemporary French culture, transforming an adherence to "Enlightenment" fashion into a militant choice defined by passion and curiosity. Fattorello² specifies that Elisabetta Caminer offers the first example in Italy of an editor of literary journals. During her editorial coordination, first, and in her direction of the periodical, there was a taste for information, curiosity, encyclopaedism, as a universal approach. Elisabetta Caminer wrote in order to divulgate subjects that were not normally accessible to everyone, yet also to combat the prejudices. In her texts emerge the objectivity of information, the responsibility for expressive choices, sometimes even subversive - as in the choice of the code - and the awareness of change in scientific communication. Science, morality, politics, academies, inventions, education, all these themes found in the pages of the her magazine a scientific, rational, rigorous treatment, which left little room for subjective judgment, yet a great deal for the objectivity of the text. As well as, in her articles we found a commitment to the battle for women's rights to scientific education.

Elisabetta Caminer Turra's *Nuovo Giornale Enciclopedico* is the emblem of eighteenth-century newspapers, which did not yet contemplate a rigid division between humanistic knowledge and scientific knowledge. These publications followed the encyclopedic model of the scholarly press, in which scientific topics were mixed with literary topics³. In addition to treatises, considered a privileged genre for the dissemination of science, in the eighteenth century the periodical press represented an important support for the diffusion of scientific communication, as it responded to the need to quickly acquire and disseminate information in very different disciplinary fields. The Venetian periodicals in particular were linked to translation from the beginning,

as they were published at a time when interest in science was particularly growing in the most important European countries such as France and England. If professionals were often able to read French texts, the new extended community of readers instead needed texts translated into Italian⁴.

2. Elisabetta Caminer's socio-cultural background

We find ourselves in the eighteenth century, the Age of Enlightenment, the age of the Arcadia and of the renewal of thought. Literature took on a new appearance, becoming a herald of truth, a propagator of science, not just an exercise of the spirit. Journalism slowly seeps into the “flaccid” folds of the lazy and static social and cultural elites, sowing the seeds of progressive change. The atmosphere in Europe was full of novelty. In 1665, *Journal des savants* was founded in Paris by Denis De Sallo and in the same year *Philosophical Transactions* arose in London, on the initiative of the Royal Society. In England, in March 1711, the first issue of *The Spectator* appeared. These magazines were read in the cafés and soon became an important source of information and opinions.

Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, scholarly journalism prevailed in Italy, and books were its main focus, aimed at the restricted audience of “savants”. Subsequently, the scenario opened up and change took hold. Theology, scholarship and abstract sciences were replaced by economics, politics, law and applied sciences. The audience extended to politicians, businessmen and professionals. The periodical press replaced the “aviso” and the “pamphlet”, and the “journalist” replaced the “gazzettiere”. The “gazzettiere” was often a bookseller or a printer, and their activity mainly consisted in collecting news or distributing notices for profit. The journalist, on the other hand, was a person of culture, presiding over the life of a newspaper, disseminating literary novellas, dissertations or operettas elaborated in their hand or by a correspondent. Gradually, the newspapers' editors moved away from the simple mission of dissemination and communication, making their papers “bodies of opinion”.

2.1 Eighteenth-century journalism in Veneto

The journalistic phenomenon soon exploded throughout the Italian peninsula, however the greatest centres of Italian journalistic activity in the eighteenth century remained Venice and Milan. Milan's journalism spreads the word “encyclopaedic” and the periodical *Il Caffè* certainly remains the most complex and significant product. The form is not far from the English models, especially *The Spectator*. The articles are never in the form of an extract or a review. Instead, they are inspired by the tone of the conversation, and soon *Il Caffè* became an essential point of reference for all attempts at “engaged” journalism, from the eighteenth century to those of the Restoration, up to the *Conciliatore*.

In the Veneto region of the early eighteenth century, on the other hand, the predominant purpose of the periodical was undoubtedly that of informing. The “estratto”, understood as a faithful summary devoid of critical aspects or writing, became the central part of the newspaper. Therefore, encyclopaedic and erudite journalism prevailed, in the wake of the *Giornale de' letterati*, founded in Rome by Francesco Nazari. The latter closely followed the model of the *Journal des savants*, offering brief presentations of books and clear objectivity of judgement.

Il *Giornale de' letterati*, founded by Apostolo Zeno in 1710, met the wishes of the public and responded to the needs of the Italian culture of the time, with the main purpose of providing Italian literary information. Although arose from the Paduan discussions of three Venetian “scholars”, Antonio Vallisnieri, Scipione Maffei and Apostolo Zeno, since its first issues the periodical was universally known as “the journal of Signor Apostolo”. This journal did not follow seventeenth-century tradition, accustomed to the presence of a single encyclopaedic drafter of all the articles. In a completely new way for Italy, the newspaper was open to a very wide collaboration and directed by a single editor. Alongside the skills of a cultural organiser, the Venetian scholar also proved to be a skilled administrator. The periodical was not only was able to remain independent, but, thanks to its eight hundred “associates”, was also able to achieve a constant and secure turnover. Consequently, Zeno’s example remained to demonstrate how a newspaper that responded well to the needs of the public represented, even when it was strictly erudite, an economically profitable enterprise.

The *Giornale de' letterati* was based on a fixed group of collaborators, to whom Zeno sent or suggested the books on which it was appropriate to make an “estratto”. The objectivity of the extract still reigned supreme, and any critical point was enclosed between two asterisks at the foot of the page and defined as an “osservazione”, according to a custom of erudition scrupulously pure and detached from any possible political echo. In contrast, the *Novelle della Repubblica delle lettere* of Giambattista Albrizzi’s letters represent a true reversal of the *Giornale de' letterati*. Here there were no “estratti” so long as to be able to replace reading a book, but rather only brief announcements to encourage the purchase of the reviewed work or to definitively mislead its evaluation (almost always for reasons of political or religious orthodoxy) – an emblematic expression of the great Venetian book market.

Therefore, until the first half of the eighteenth century, Venice and the Veneto region had not yet found in the newspaper that critical source of information that France had acquired for some time. Moreover, in the second half of the eighteenth century the distinction between the gazette and scholarly periodicals persisted. The two fundamental lines along which Italian journalism had evolved since the seventeenth century continued to characterise the phenomenon. Literary journalism developed from the primitive nucleus of “novelle” (novellas/latest news) and “estratti” (excerpts), while the political gazette was born on the basis of “avvisi” (news/notices).

Alongside this almost rigid opposition between cultural and political interests, there was also another need which periodicals and almanacs had been striving to respond to for some time and discontinuously: that of following and illustrating city life and news. Precisely in Venice, where the taste for everyday things and events was most alive, Gasparo Gozzi's *Gazzetta* was born. With Gozzi's experience, people and everyday things, thefts and pranks, worldly chronicles and love affairs enter the scene for the first time in a periodical. On the one hand, this confirmed the irreplaceable usefulness of the human experience and contact with reality, while on the other it highlighted the distrust of abstract principles and generalisations. However, what gave Gozzi's newspapers a very particular historical interest, and which at the same time marked an essential moment in the development of Veneto journalism, was the continuous mixing of old elements and new ideas. We find the value of observation and experience and the ability to collect and merge the most disparate subjects of immediate city interest, from theatrical news to commercial notices, from daily news to apologists and moral fairy tales.

Gozzi's attempt left a void in an entire sector of the Venetian press. Only in the last decade of the Republic did it see a Venetian bi-weekly sheet, that encyclopaedic *gazzetta* that Gozzi had not been able to assure the city: the *Gazzetta urbana veneta*. For eleven years, this was the work of a single editor, the Brescian Antonio Piazza, who managed it up to the entry of the Austrians in Venice. Open to a thousand topics on which it loved to digress and inform, the newspaper from Piazza did not set out to "enlighten" its readers, but its modernity also lay in the many ideas it enjoyed bringing into circulation and in the self-confident interest in all "new things". There was talk of a circulation of the *Gazzetta* di Piazza ranging from 2,000 copies, and if this high figure is not certain, it is certain that it achieved a numerical circulation that no other Venetian periodical had enjoyed until then.

School reforms (and above all university reforms) pushed the separation of cultures and specialisation. This process was beginning to be reflected considerably in the press. If until then many "erudite" newspapers had hosted articles on medical or mathematical, geological or botanical subjects, these had began as a marginal contribution, to which only the encyclopaedic conception of literature granted the right of citizenship. Born with a specialist character, "scientific journalism" instead wanted to satisfy the information needs of the naturalist, the mathematician and the doctor. These were publications that required a specialised audience and were mainly aimed at professional categories.

In 1762, Dr. Pietro Orteschi founded the *Giornale di medicina*, with which he aimed to raise the professional level of medicine. However, there was a science which, unlike medicine, at that time came out of the ambit of technical specialisation to reach ever wider interests, to form the basis of every reform and every discourse on "public happiness" and on the economy of the state: agriculture. Pointing out the

obstacles to the rational exploitation of the land, talking about the condition of the peasants, discussing management relationships, proposing new techniques, meant tackling problems that were directly connected with the government work of the Venetian Republic. For this reason, in the absence of explicitly political journalism, it was precisely on this terrain – not only in the Veneto region but in all the countries of the “ancien régime” – that the maturation of reformist ideas found its true field of action.

In this context, the *Giornale d'Italia spettante alla scienza naturale e principalmente all'agricoltura, alle arti e al commercio* of Francesco Grisellini, founded on July 7th, 1764, and which soon became the effective body of the agricultural academies, fits into this context. Due to the fact that it was open to all the scholars and academies of Italy, it did not represent the expression of a group or a tendency, much less of a single writer, and presented itself on an absolutely different level from that on which they moved the gazettes and literary journals, linking themselves to eighteenth-century Venetian economic thought. Therefore, in the wake of the press from beyond the mountains, the tradition of the newspaper of extracts was breaking down to give way to a slight political-ideological shade and tone.

Berengo concludes his analysis of eighteenth-century Venetian journalism with these words. However, they did not penetrate in a deep way. It was the periodicals most timidly leaning towards the new, yet invincibly linked to the ancient, that gave the most real measure of the society that had expressed them”⁵.

2.2 Women, journalism and scientific dissemination

It has often been written that the Age of Enlightenment would in many ways also be that of women. However, it should be noted that while on the one hand the Enlightenment declared war on prejudices and exalted the principle of universality and equality based on natural law, on the other there was a continuation of defending the idea of a separate and inferior “feminine nature”. As Benedetto Croce wrote: “with Arcadia, seventeenth-century feminine, monastic and ascetic literature ceased; women then also turned to the sciences and to debates on social welfare, politics and the economy [...] the chain continued in the 19th century”⁶.

The eighteenth century also saw a lively female presence in the printing sector, especially periodicals, of which women had perceived the strong power to influence public opinion. In England and France, journalism had a stable female component throughout the early modern period.

The first woman to publish a journal of her own account in England was Mary de la Rivière Manley, whose *Female Tatler* appeared in 1709 published under the pseudonym Mrs Crackenthorpe. Her political satire against the “Whigs” cost her prison. Eliza Haywood, on the other hand, editor of the *Female Spectator* (1744-1746) and later of the *Epistles for the Ladies*, aimed, she said, at making education fashionable.

The first French woman journalist whose identity we know was Marie-Jeanne L'Heritier, who in 1703 created *L'Erudition enjouée ou nouvelles savantes, satiriques e galantes écrites à une dame francaise qui est à Madrid*. The journal, which never saw the light of day, was meant to be an attempt to establish a female critical tradition, against "doctoral" literary criticism. But only with the monthly *Journal des Dames* do we find the clear commitment of a journal by and for women. Created by the hands of a man as a harmless toy to amuse society ladies in their dressing room, in the intervening period, it bore the names of three women directors who completely transformed him. Interestingly, *Journal des Dames* became a serious oppositional publication that tackled social issues, called for reforms, and challenged its readers to think, to let go of vanities, and to feed minds. Returning to the Italian panorama, *La Toelette* was founded in Florence in 1770. Bellocchi defines it as the first Italian women's periodical. It was a monthly collection of Tuscan prose and verses which aimed to provide a pleasant read to women, who were often bored when they subjected themselves to the skilful care of beauticians. Moreover, again in Tuscany in 1775 the *Biblioteca galante* was founded and in 1781 the *Giornale delle dame*, which came out every 6 days in Florence.

In Venice in 1786, the weekly *La donna galante ed erudita* was born and, in the same year, *Il Giornale delle dame della moda di Francia*, while *Il magazzino della moda e del gusto* dates back to 1781. These are magazines dedicated exclusively to women, with fashion advice and amorous advice, circulated only among the ladies of the beau monde. They are almost always small-format periodicals, printed by some gentleman, which do not exceed the confines of patrician salons. In other words, these are "male" newspapers for women, which represent that trivialization of femininity that Mary Wollstonecraft would have energetically deplored at the end of the eighteenth century in her *Vindication of right of Woman*, the true basic text of feminism.

The "catalogo" was one of the most relevant documents of women's reality in the Age of Enlightenment. The illustrious women taken as an example represented the exaltation, as opposed to male violence, of a different type of strength, precisely because this strength was female: that of one's religious beliefs and one's ethical principles. What emerged was a woman who always had a positive role in the history of humanity, the strongest and most resolute role. And it clearly emerged how the courage, the nobility and the virtue of the woman were supported by values such as love and religiosity. In other words, women, unlike men, did not use vices to fight vices.

In the eighteenth century, women were excluded from formal higher education courses, from universities and in the few cases in which they managed to access studies and teaching positions, their contribution did not tend to produce new knowledge, but was limited to the dissemination of theories discovered by others⁷. Women's education was neglected, and they could be educated either at home by inexperienced mothers, or in convents, with manual labour or religious sermons, while high schools, colleges, universities and tutors were only for men.

However, the female contribution to the development of scientific studies animated passionate discussions in those years, as demonstrated in an exemplary manner in 1723 by the scientist Antonio Vallisneri in his dissertation *Se le donne si debbono ammettere allo studio delle scienze e delle arti nobili*. Just as scientific works were increasingly aimed at a female audience. In fact, the publication of books on scientific topics addressed to women constituted the first step towards scientific dissemination, which in the eighteenth century established itself as a consumer genre also through the periodical press for non-specialists⁸.

In particular, the disciplinary field of chemistry was very popular with women. The Romagna jurist, journalist and man of letters Giuseppe Compagnoni published *La chimica per le donne* in Venice in 1796, starting from the assumption that chemistry was, at the time, a fashionable science, suitable for arousing the curiosity of frequenters of salons and newspaper readers, who already in the 17th century were interested in the first preparations for the beauty of the skin or in the remedies of the pharmacopoeia. *La chimica per le donne* represents an important operation of didactic simplification, as the author, often resorting to images and comparisons of everyday experience, tried to paraphrase the scientific discourse with expressions that recalled shared meanings in the collective imagination³.

3. The history of the magazine. From L'Europa letteraria to the Nuovo giornale enciclopedico d'Italia

Berengo writes: "When in September 1768 the publications of literary Europe began, few of its readers must have had the impression of being faced with a truly new fact"⁵. "Floriferis ut apes in saltibus omnia libant". This was the "motto" of Domenico Caminer's new periodical, *L'Europa letteraria*, which came out in Venice from September 1768 to May 1773, first at the Palese printing house (September 1768-September 1769) then at the Fenziana printing house (October 1769-May 1773), again at the expense of the journalist. The subscription was 24 lire a year, and the newspaper consisted of parts that came out monthly, each of 112 pages, with its own title page, numbering and index. Two parts formed a volume and six volumes a vintage, which began with the month of September.

The new periodical did not differ much from the usual type of book review journal with the addition of literary novellas. Literary and scientific articles were translated from other journals or texts, especially from the *Mercur de France* and the *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*. In addition, original articles (marked by an asterisk) appeared, while for all the others the journalist cited the exact source from which they were taken. It is no coincidence that Domenico Caminer wrote on the title page of his journal in the January 1774 issue: "The institution of my newspaper is to take the best of the other newspapers, singularly foreign, and of the

best literary gazettes, to save the expense and effort of the literati. However, I do not fail to include all the new books of which it is possible to be informed”.

Therefore, *L'Europa letteraria* adhered exclusively to book information. Moreover, it was a journalistic scheme by now widely spread throughout eighteenth-century Europe. However, there was one element that immediately distinguished this journal from those that had preceded it in Venice – the personality of its editor. Caminer was neither a man of letters, nor a scientist, nor a polemicist. He was rather a “gazzettiere” and a compiler, the newspaper was not for him the body of a cultural trend or the meeting point of scientific experiences carried out in the State, but only a professional tool. Moreover, it must be remembered that Domenico Caminer was certainly not new to journalism. In 1762 he had undertaken the enterprise, which immediately failed, of the *Nuova gazzetta veneta*, on the model of Gozzi's *Gazzetta veneta*, and in 1765 he was the first in Italy to attempt the adventure of a newspaper: the *Diario veneto*, of which, however, only 90 issues came out.

Recuperati writes: “Domenico Caminer is in some way the prototype of a professional journalist of a certain skill, but also with a remarkable sense of his own limitations”. In other words, with him the figure of the journalist begins to take shape, who must be neither a judge nor a tribunal of unappealable sentences. And he adds: “The turning point, in the field of literary journalism, must have been linked to a family of journalists who somehow got involved in all the businesses of the second half of the 18th century, that of the Caminers”⁹.

Certainly, *L'Europa letteraria* did not have the same distinctly scientific and, if you like, even a bit specialized cut of the *Giornale d'Italia spettante alla scienza naturale e principalmente all'agricoltura, alle arti e al commercio* of Francesco Grisellini. If the latter, as already mentioned, soon ended up becoming the effective body of the agricultural academies, Caminer's review referred to that encyclopedism which had its synonyms nuanced in European, universal, transmontane. Certainly, however, they had in common that taste for information, that curiosity, that ardour for knowledge and novelty typical of the Enlightenment. In any case, *L'Europa letteraria* remains an important turning point in Veneto journalism, as it represents the first attempt of Enlightenment thought (above all of Voltaire and Rousseau) to approach the Venetian jurisdictional tradition.

If at the beginning *L'Europa letteraria* presented itself as an anthology of European articles, slowly the younger collaborators (Elisabetta Caminer and the abbot Fortis) took over and their signed original part grew in importance. Fortis was a journalist and naturalist, biographer and translator, poet, critic and scholar, quite distant from Domenico Caminer. Between the two men there was not only the impossibility of understanding the two cultures and two different temperaments, but there was, above all, the antithesis between two profoundly distant journalistic conceptions. For Caminer, *L'Europa letteraria* had to remain the impartial perspective of the ideas that were

manifesting themselves on both sides of the Alps – it had to be a common thread for the educated public eager to read. And therefore the “gazzettiere” was entitled to merge and retouch the extracts (or excerpts) that his collaborators offered him. For Fortis, on the other hand, as for Elisabetta Caminer, information was one of the goals of the newspaper but not its main purpose. They also wrote to fight the prejudices of the century, while expressing their ideas.

Let us now look at the structure of the magazine. Most of the periodical consisted of extracts or excerpts from foreign journals and only a few were original articles. The topics covered were different, ranging from physics to philosophy, from history to literature. In any case, whether they were original articles or translated articles, they were all signed with initials; especially those of Alberto Fortis (A.F.), Domenico Caminer (D.C.) and Elisabetta Caminer Turra (E.C.T.). There were also two fixed sections: “Accademie” and “Novelle Letterarie”. The first was dedicated to reporting the activity of the various academies of the time. These were annotations that informed the reader about the latest publications and discoveries of the academies, or about the prizes to be won for disquisitions around a possible theme. The academies involved were from all over Europe and dealt with various disciplines. Suffice it to recall for Sciences and Fine Letters that of Prussia, that of Mantua or that of Paris; for Agriculture that of Orleans, and for the Economy that of Bern.

The “Novelle Letterarie” section deserves a separate discussion. The term was not completely new in the journalistic-literary field. In fact, as already mentioned, Giambattista Albrizzi had founded the *Novelle della Repubblica delle Lettere* in Venice, replacing the “estratto” with brief announcements of the reviewed work to encourage or discourage its purchase. While in Florence the literary novels of Giovanni Lami were born, certainly closer to that critical-subjective journalism that was spreading in France. The review had acquired a snappier, “gazzettiere” tone, perhaps also due to the periodical’s weekly cadence. The section “Novelle Letterarie” of *L’Europa letteraria*, on the other hand, was placed halfway between the two experiences mentioned. It was neither the pure speculation of a bookseller nor real reviews. Instead, we find much more simply, detailed information on the publication and structure of new works. Furthermore, the works cited were not necessarily literary. On the contrary, they were often didactic texts that facilitated the understanding of subjects not normally accessible to everyone.

However, the enlightened and enlightened spirit of the column did not reside only in this intention of universal diffusion of the works, but rather in the free treatment of all literary, scientific, political, social, religious themes, beyond any authoritarian block and conservative. The authors of the newspaper, after giving notice of the latest texts, then promised themselves to report excerpts from them in the near future. The price of the works was specified and, at times, there was the willingness to send the text to interested parties who could not obtain it personally. The style used in the reviews

was clear, simple, elegant and clear. There was also a brief summary of the work with a historical-literary slant.

It is also worth remembering that in *L'Europa letteraria* other categories also often recurred: "Fatti storici", "Aneddoti" and "Osservazioni" (Historical facts, Anecdotes and Remarks).

Certainly, *L'Europa letteraria* always gave evidence of a certain journalistic honesty. While all the articles were signed, even if only with the collaborator's initials, they never failed to indicate the source of the articles extracted from other newspapers, uncommon in the history of Italian journalism of the time.

In May 1773, *L'Europa letteraria* died, announcing in its last issue the birth of a new publication, *Il Giornale enciclopedico*. Although the new journal presented itself as the continuation of *Europa*, it differed in the greater variety of subjects divided into sections such as: "Invenzioni" ("Feeding horses", "Agricultural machinery", or "Means of extinguishing the fuco"), "Arti", "Fatti singolari" (the union of two spouses near Mantua, born and died on the same day, at the age of one hundred, and buried in the same grave), "Fatti rimarcabili" ("wicked husband sells his wife for half a guinea in Ponte Sract"), "Stabilimenti utili" ("in Bicestra, near Paris, the police occupy the prisoners making them polish the mirrors in a single purposely built building"), "Teatro", which included reviews on theatrical anthologies or on performances of theatrical works both in Italy and abroad, themes dear to Elisabetta Caminer and later developed in many of her articles. Consequently, the result was a rather varied periodical that came close to that of the "magazzino".

The periodical, from 1774 to 1777, was published in Venice, in the Fenziana printing house. The publication remained monthly, but the subscription went from the 24 lire per year (the price of *L'Europa letteraria*) to 22, and the number of pages increased. In Vicenza, it was possible to receive it at Antonio Veronese's bookshop. In its first issues, *Il Giornale enciclopedico* seemed to faithfully preserve the editorial structure of *L'Europa*: Domenico Caminer still remained at its head and it was he himself who energetically attributed paternity to himself. Its inspiring principle was that "he would certainly have rendered a notable service to society who had succeeded in causing even the most distant nations to communicate their respective knowledge and discoveries to each other and to participate mutually in obtaining happiness" ("Model of the preface", *Giornale enciclopedico*, January 1774, p. 3). It would have contained excerpts from more recent books, literary novels, theatre, fashions, noteworthy facts, with the intention of writing only "those interesting, curious and worthy of universal attention" historical events. There were dissertations, illustrations of texts, interpretations of words, questions of geometry and theology, literary controversies, anatomical discoveries, announcements of recent publications of ancient works, magnificent praises to the most famous Arcadians, to the French encyclopaedists in whose honour they were published praise and letters.

In 1774, the lawyer Giovanni Scola began to collaborate with the magazine. The meeting between Elisabetta Caminer and Scola certainly marked a turning point for *Il Giornale enciclopedico*. For his part, Scola “brought to his new job as a journalist the long meditation on the main Enlightenment texts, his rejection and dissatisfaction with the forensic world, a vocation as a reformer and Enlightenment militant to which the ‘encyclopaedic’ periodical finally gave space”¹⁰.

Consequently, the ever more imposing presence of Elisabetta Caminer and of the new collaborator Scola marginalised Domenico Caminer and transformed the “estratto” (which in the intentions of the old journalist was to remain informative and summary, leaving the judgment to the reader) into a new literary genre that was creative and militant. In other words, the reports of the presented works increasingly turned into presentations of original contributions.

In 1777, Elisabetta Caminer took over the direction of *Il Giornale enciclopedico* which in her hands was destined to become one of the most significant Italian Enlightenment periodicals. Therefore, in January 1777, the periodical began to be published in Vicenza, where Caminer had moved after her marriage to Doctor Turra. From 1777 to 1778, it was published at the Modena printing house, from February to December 1778 at the Mosca printing house and from 1779 to 1789 at the Turra printing house. Gradually, Elisabetta Caminer managed to gather a fair number of collaborators around her magazine. They were writers of different levels and from various fields: for mathematics, professors Toaldo and Lorgna; for the natural sciences Abbot Fortis and Doctor Turra; for the philosophical sciences that Giovanni Scola and Agostino Vivorio; for history Domenico Caminer; for literature, Giulio Trento, a well-educated and excellent taste from Treviso, a praised translator of Sallustio; and then Prof. Sibiliato of Padua, Abbot Mazzola, Lorenzo Tornieri, Clemente Bondi, Abbot Lazzaro Spallanzani, Antonio Dondi Orologio and others. Furthermore, the relationship between *Il Giornale enciclopedico* and the rest of Italian and foreign journalistic production was quite close. Entire articles were often reported in the magazine and sometimes even several particularly interesting pages from other newspapers. France, at first, was widely represented in the Elisabetta Caminer’s *Giornale enciclopedico* as that nation which ran with youthful enthusiasm to break every bond imposed by tradition and faith. Then, progressively, the different spirit of old Germany was also taking shape with the review of books that had already passed through the judgment of France. And yet, the new problems of science, philosophy and law found their place alongside the recipe for preventing wrinkles or the heroic act performed by a beggar in a given country.

Consequently, *Il Giornale Enciclopedico* was increasingly affected by the new direction of enlightened public opinion and became more scientific. It often published a weather report, mathematical and lithological studies, thanks to learned collaborators who found in the journal the means of communicating and discussing their ideas. One could read communications by abbot Spallanzani on the mechanism of diges-

tion, essays on Euganean lithology by Antonio Dondi Orologio, memoirs by abbot Giambattista da S. Martino on the hydrometer and the way to make the use of the microscope easier, or studies in which he demonstrated the damage that came to the Venetian states from the decrease of the prairies and, with the rigor of scientific observation, he painted the aspects and customs of the places, of the people.

In 1781, the collaboration between Elisabetta Caminer and Scola was abruptly broken, and the so-called “heroic” moment of the periodical also came to an end. The collaboration that had made *Il Giornale enciclopedico di Venezia e di Vicenza* one of the smartest and liveliest monthlies in the Italian cultural world ended.

Meanwhile, in 1779, Elisabetta Caminer’s husband, Doctor Turra, had opened his own printing house in via delle Canove, in Vicenza, which was to serve for the publication of the newspaper. Scola was succeeded by Fortis, with whom Elisabetta Caminer, from 1782 to 1787, set up a company with the aim of editing and administering the newspaper, which took the title of *Nuovo Giornale enciclopedico*. The new periodical moved along a progressive and lively line, but more controlled than before. Certainly the Enlightenment newspaper resulting from the Caminer-Fortis collaboration became a lively, well-informed, almost always well-written periodical, but not too different from the many that were published in Venice and in Italy. The *Nuovo Giornale enciclopedico* was in monthly instalments of 128 pages. Unlike the earlier *Giornale enciclopedico*, the back pages were devoted to boasting the efficacy of certain specific bedbug and gout remedies, certain recipes for making candles, for dyeing eyes, lips, hair, and so on. Elisabetta Caminer continued to write about literature, theatre, philosophy and science, however with an erudition no longer solidly linked to a coherent reformist plan.

In 1790, the newspaper came out in a smaller format, with the title of *Nuovo Giornale enciclopedico d’Italia*. The periodical was no longer published in Vicenza, but rather in Venice. The publisher was Giacomo Storti, who continued to print it even after Elisabetta Caminer’s death, until 1797, when the Venetian Republic fell into the hands of Austria. This was the last stage of the newspaper, which consequently ended up in the same city where it had been born several years earlier. Literary articles became visibly rarer from issue to issue. After 1790 the collaboration of abbot Fortis also began to wane, and the periodical became a cold scholarly bulletin.

Extracts from other Italian and foreign newspapers were reported more and more frequently. Let us mention a few: “Mercurio” di Francia, “Fogli svedesi”, “Fogli inglesi”, “Foglio di Stoccolma” “Esame critico” ed “Esame analitico”, “Notizie letterarie”, “Spirito dei giornali”, “Foglio del coltivatore”, “Biblioteca dell’uomo pubblico”. The fixed features became the “Osservazioni metereologiche”, alongside the “Accademie” and the reviews of the texts, which were no longer called “Novelle Letterarie” but “Bibliografia”. Then there were the usual headings, more or less fixed, such as “Invenzioni”, “Scoperte”, “Ritrovati utili”, “Agricoltura” and to these was

added a new one: “Necrologi”. The issue dated June 1796 contained a letter from the publisher Storti which sadly announced the death of the woman who had been the soul of the *Enciclopedia*, with the notice that he proposed to continue it on his own. However, his efforts were in vain. The newspaper ceased completely in 1797, unable to adapt to the new needs of literary production and consumption.

4. Elisabetta Caminer’s contribution to the journal and feminine language of science

The journalistic work of Elisabetta Caminer therefore unfolds for a period of time ranging from 1768 to 1796, that is, from when she was seventeen years old until her death. A life spent for that “publishing” that she considered not a sacrifice or a mission, but a passion. What stimulated her interest at times was pure curiosity, the singularity of the topics, beyond the moral and civil significance they could have. To satisfy her cosmopolitan streak, regardless of importance, the news still served to connect with the rest of the world. Elisabetta Caminer had a outspoken respect for the objectivity of information and judgments, and at the same time spent a good part of her ingenuity and her commitment in the battles on female education and on women’s cultural and civil values.

At Elisabetta Caminer’s time, journalism was considered not a real profession but rather a secondary and amateurish activity. It was generally a path chosen by members of the petty bourgeoisie who did not have the opportunity to enter more lucrative careers. As a matter of fact, throughout the eighteenth century, journalism remained a profession that was not only difficult, but also unprofitable from an economic point of view as well as that of social affirmation.

With regard to the vast development of the phenomenon of information and press in eighteenth-century Italy, Ugo Bellocchi writes: “At the service of so many periodicals, the number of editors also necessarily increases. Journalism is a profession. In relation to those who practice it, the public initiates that indefinable relationship which is made up of esteem and courtship, admiration and envy, captivation and insult, and which is often expressed externally, childishly, in an attitude of sufficiency and controversy”¹¹. Other prominent figures of the time also spoke about the role of newspapers and the role of the journalist. Cesare Beccaria, for example, argued that newspapers “communicate and disseminate among the people, or labourers, or idlers” knowledge previously reserved for scholars. While Vittorio Alfieri, struck by an unfavourable journalistic criticism, defended himself with these words: “Giving and taking what you don’t have / It’s a new ability. / Who gives fame? / The Journalists. / Who is he defaming? / The Journalists. / But who feeds / The journalists? / The idle, the ignorant, the envious, the sad”.

However, for Elisabetta Caminer, who was – or rather who was supposed to be – a journalist? In the August 1769 issue Caminer stated: “This little book doesn’t seem like much to me; in any case, whoever begins to make extracts cannot in good con-

science neglect what may interest many people”¹². And in the November issue of the same year she wrote: “Due to the delay in the trade, it happens that we have to judge new books with the opinion of foreign journalists, making use of their labours out of necessity, and as a fatal consequence sometimes adopting some superficiality”¹³.

Regarding the reporter-excerpt relationship, in January 1771 she stated: “[this is] a sign that the journalist did not understand it”¹⁴. Certainly, she was deeply interested in the objectivity of the journalist, who absolutely should not influence the public’s opinion. Consequently, in a subsequent article, she reiterated that the public was the only judge of the translations of Gozzi and Mr. D’Arnaud and journalists must absolutely not influence [the public’s opinion] with personal judgments.

However, even back in 1773, this style of clear-cut informative journalism, in Domenico Caminer’s style, was beginning to lose ground due to the advance of the polemical and combative journalism of Elisabetta in her best years. Moreover, in 1774 the fateful meeting with Scola would take place and the newspaper would then enter the Enlightenment for all intents and purposes. Indeed, Caminer wrote, in the March 1773, an article about the slave trade: “The newspaper has always been committed against traders of human flesh. [...] but finally even if he and this Journal had no other merit than that of defending the cause of humanity and inspiring love for virtue and a desire for equity, we believe that for this alone he would be worthy of the protection of the Governments which approve it, of the esteem of the Readers for whom we write, of the persons of letters who honor it with their approval. [...] Friends of men without distinction of zones and opinions, we will continue to enrich our volumes with what we believe capable of contributing to the progress of reason, morality, knowledge”¹⁵. Continuing the analysis of Elisabetta Caminer’s articles (E. Caminer Turra, “Ricerche sommesse intorno ad alcuni dei Riflessi giusti e necessari sul Giornale enciclopedico”, *Giornale enciclopedico*, aprile 1779, pp. 113 ss), when addressing the anonymous author of the “Reflections just and necessary”, with an innate journalistic acumen and a calm faith in the rights and nobility of the journalistic profession, Elisabetta wrote: “you have made every effort to make us disregard; with some warnings we will try to make you better, and therefore more esteemed than you are”.

Subsequently, Elisabetta Caminer would find more than one occasion to specify everything that journalists should not have done: they should not have judged the works, they should not have made comparisons, they should not have examined the authors or described dissertations. Often, she believed, journalists, “are caught between conscience and convenience, between sentiment and modesty, look for clichés to avoid saying something decisive about books”; they would like to copy a work to be able to tell readers what “it is not always convenient to pronounce”¹⁶.

Regarding “informative” journalism, at times “combative”, yet also “encyclopaedic”, she stated: “The word Encyclopaedia means ‘concatenation of knowledge’, and the purpose of this journal is precisely to collect and present together the different knowl-

edge, which remaining scattered, and due to the limited trade between booksellers in Italy and the ultramontism and the disesteem that certain nations have of some others, and for political reasons and the neglect of many, would be largely ignored.”

Due to the fact that, according to her habit she never neglected the pleasant side alongside the useful aspect, she affirmed: “and if leaving aside these useful objects, we want to consider an encyclopaedic journal on the side of pleasure, the curiosity that finds pasture in the knowledge of what happens during the day, the amenity that tries to suck the flowers lightly and has as a maxim not to mess with the fruits, the idleness that weighs on others and on itself, not knowing how to spend the moment, will be able to find their song there”¹⁷.

In order to gain an idea of the taste for the universality of the topics covered and for the universality of their diffusion, we should also consider “Introduction to the academic collection, composed of the Memoirs, Proceedings, or Journals of the most famous Academies and Literary Societies of Europe”: “A number of societies and Academies made up of the most learned and enlightened men in Europe are continually applying themselves to making useful discoveries, and to spreading the lights of observation, experience and calculation on the all parts of the Sciences; but the fruits of their labours enclosed in too many volumes are treasures almost hollowed out, and beyond the reach of most learned men. Besides, dare it be said, all the efforts of these men have not been equally happy. The merit of their collections consists still more in the whole than in the different parts; they are luminous rays which do not illuminate all the points of the earth in the same degree, but to which the whole earth owes its fecundity”¹⁸.

Therefore, her journalism also had the typically “enlightenment” and “enlightened” characteristics of universality, equity and humanity, as when she stated that her newspaper had the merit of “defending the cause of humanity and inspiring love for virtue, and desire for equity”, and that her collaborators were “friends of men without distinction of areas and opinions”. The informative purpose consequently ended up being confused with the educational goal. The journalist was absolutely not supposed to influence the reader’s judgment, while they could, however, guide the reader in more enlightened and illuminating readings, contributing to the dissemination of relevant texts, even if not brand new, or to the dissemination of translated or still little-known foreign works. Between the 17th and 18th centuries, journalism was recognized as one of the most successful tools for building cultural networks. Wisdom, honesty, objectivity, goodness, truth, modesty, and competence were, then, in Caminer Turra’s view, the qualities of good writing, and she took them to be essential, necessary, and fair. Above all, they represented the writing criteria adopted by the entire editorial staff of the *Giornale enciclopedico*. Journalists had to take responsibility for their own ideas, to always be honest towards readers, aim towards clarity in writing and – above all – believe in freedom of thought, in the value of intellectual debate, and in respect for

others' opinions. Thus, a modern idea of journalism emerged, according to which journalism was not only a means for cultural promotion but also an instrument for militant criticism, serving the double purpose of utility and pleasure, providing an opening to modernity which allowed Elisabetta Caminer Turra to be recognized as one of the most important advocates of Enlightenment principles in the Veneto region – a fertile ground for ideas and cultural exchange¹⁹.

On the pages of Caminer Turra's articles emerged a modern conception of journalism which valued objectivity of information, autonomy, and the ideological freedom of the journalist, who could now be recognized as a real professional figure, and taking an innovative stance towards the contemporary social and cultural context. And this is evident also about the issue of science.

Towards the end of the 18th century in Europe up-to-date information on the latest events and the most interesting innovations in all scientific fields of knowledge started circulating. Facts and events directly related to science and its applications were reported along with that information. This phenomenon follows the genesis of public opinion on science, and it is part of the process of the formation of public opinion in 17th century described by Jürgen Habermas. Along with the first news-sheets and newspapers, new communication channels and forms were created for science also in Italy, where science news appeared for the first time in periodicals aimed at a non-specialist audience rather than traditional academic publications²⁰.

In the review of the volume *Esame d'alcune teorie moderne intorno alla causa prossima della contrazione muscolare* by Giacomo Barzellotti, member of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Siena, published in the first issue of 1797 (January-April), Elisabetta Caminer intends to inform in order to argue. The article opens with the typical expository methods of an informative-argumentative text that immediately wants to draw the reader's attention to the topic covered, that is the studies of physiologists regarding the nervous stimuli capable of explaining muscle contraction. However, with reference to specialist lexicon, Elisabetta Caminer opts for the semantic re-determination of words belonging to the common language and reformulated in syntagms characterized from a scientific point of view (blood flow, nervous stimulus, muscular contraction, electrical fluid, fleshy fibres)³.

In the pages of Caminer's periodical, attempts were made to educate midwives and surgeons with manuals that prescribed hygienic and medical rules for childbirth, the care of newborns and breastfeeding. Science attempted to undermine prejudices regarding the birth of children and the senseless modesty that led many women to bind their bellies to hide their pregnancy. In the review of Professor Sancerotte's treatise, an attempt was made to explain the reasons for numerous abortions, with the aim not only of informing but also of providing instructions to potential readers ("L'Esame di molti pregiudizi, ed usi abusivi concernenti le femmine gravide, quelle che hanno partorito i bambini; i quali pregiudizi fanno degenerare la specie umana, con

modi di rimediarvi”, del S. Sancerotte Chirurgo, Strasburgo, *Giornale enciclopedico* 1777). The ironic tone and short exposition guide the female audience to understand the story. Caminer probably publishes these articles with the intention of warning her interlocutors against prejudice, avoiding personal comments, using rhetoric, and indirectly inviting them to follow the nature and advice of the doctor Sancerotte. There are also some pseudo-scientific articles translated or reviewed by Caminer’s periodical. Among these it is also interesting to report the news example of “a very extraordinary event involving a pregnant man; taken from N.X of “Gazzetta Salutare di Buglione” published on March 2 1775. In the introduction, the journalist, since it was an exceptional event, declared that the events narrated had been documented by the commanders of the garrison within which the event had occurred. In this case the communicative style moves away from the expository methods of scientific discourse and takes on the features of a news story, with a looser style that aims to accompany the reader in the narrative and to intrigue him until the end of the narrative, in which it is explained a homosexual bond. Here too Caminer abstains from any judgement³. At the end, the Caminer’s reviews and articles use discursive methods to reach a less specialized audience. This feminine language of science fits well into the eighteenth-century Italian context, balanced between tradition and innovation. What emerges is the awareness of the change in scientific communication and in the way of arguing it, both in reference to the cultural expectations and on the basis of expressive choices suitable for correct decoding by the target.

Conclusions

Elisabetta Caminer recognised that eighteenth-century philosophical thought, in all its complex aspects, held a decisive role and force for the growth of men and women as citizens and for the development of society. Based on the analysis of her writings, we can clearly see that this young journalist made her magazine a true driving force behind Enlightenment culture and thought, consequently becoming a point of reference for philosophers, scientists and scholars, both Italian and foreign. The defence of the innovative turning point of the Enlightenment emerges not only from the choice of arguments, but also from the method adopted for the analysis. Literature, theatre, poetry, religion, morality, science, philosophy, politics, agriculture, academies, the homeland, military, art, travel, inventions, women, history, education, and legislation – all these themes found in the pages of the magazine a scientific, rational, rigorous treatment, which left little room for subjective judgment, yet a great deal for the objectivity of the text.

The value of the documentation, that is the sources, was sovereign. The reader had to be put in a position in order to be able to personally judge a text. It was necessary that while reading an “excerpt” or a review, the reader would never lose sight of the main

topic of the work, not favouring a fragmentation of the text that became broke down into irrelevant details. The message had to reach the reader in a clear and thorough manner. It would then be the reader, according to their taste and needs, who could extrapolate particular meanings. Moreover, we should always bear in mind that we were addressing a universal audience and that, as a result, the author's primary purpose must have been that of explaining topics, which were often entirely unknown, with simplicity and clarity. This method was attributable both to the authors of the extracts and reviews of the individual texts, as well as the authors of the texts themselves, who often ended up betraying the didactic-educational intent at the foundation of their mission.

Elisabetta Caminer made a great contribution to the science' communication in Italy through periodicals directed at a non-specialist audience. She reported facts and events for the genesis of public opinion on science. The intention of supporting and spreading the thoughts and methods of science can also be seen in Elisabetta Caminer's explanation of her conception of the "Giornale Enciclopedico". The word "encyclopaedia" was a real watchword in the Age of Enlightenment and she gave it the fuller meaning of "concatenation of knowledge".

Her newspaper was not sectorial, neither in the subject matter nor in the method of analysis used. Instead, her publication was in line with the times and in continuous dialogue, in an open dialectic with the more or less educated reader. Next to the philosophical text, there was the popular anecdote, or a piece on astronomy or natural physics. The Caminer's reviews and articles use discursive methods to reach a less specialized audience.

Undoubtedly, Elisabetta Caminer did not openly support the revolution. However, she always sided, in every situation, on the side of renewal. She allowed the pages of her newspaper to speak in favour of abortion. She fought against all forms of ignorance, prejudice and habit. It can be said that she preferred a reformist method to a revolutionary method in order to affirm the depth and value of the new ideals of the Enlightenment, balanced between tradition and innovation. Her feminine language of science fits well into the awareness of power of change of scientific communication, in reference to the cultural expectations of the Italian panorama of the time, and specifically from where the journalist was working, the Republic of Venice.

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